

SUMMARY

BA-130

GORSUCH TAVERN

1813

VERONA or GLENCOE,,MD.

PRIVATE

Large, L-shaped brick dwelling and hostelry built in 1813 by Dickinson Gorsuch shortly after the adjoining road was upgraded into an inter-State turnpike leading to York, Pa. Purchased 1817 by seafarer Captain Joshua Gorsuch who dealt in dry goods and liquors. Was gathering place of Gorsuch family members who followed their escaped slaves to Lancaster County, Pa., and sparked the Christiana Riot of 1851. Later served as Cole's store and the Verona Post Office; still later a speak-easy, an antique-filled restaurant, a bar, and a ballroom. Finally converted to apartment use in 1940's. Notable for second-story galleries and railings.

**RECEIVED****OCT 26 1979****MARYLAND HISTORICAL  
TRUST**

## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC GORSUCH TAVERN

AND/OR COMMON

Verona Post Office — Nineteen Mile House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

15,911 York Road

CITY, TOWN

Sparks

☒ VICINITY OF

2nd

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland 21152

COUNTY

Baltimore County

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC☒ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☒ OTHER: (Apts.)**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Portia Slaughter Nelson,  
Ann S. Antal, Frances Townsend

Telephone #: 472-2384

STREET &amp; NUMBER

15,910 York Road

CITY, TOWN

Sparks

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

Maryland 21152

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Courts Building

Liber #: EHK JR. 5735

Folio #: 544

STREET &amp; NUMBER

401 Bosley Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland 21204

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Baltimore County Historic Sites Inventory

DATE

On-going since 1964

BA 130 Entered 7-29-65

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Maryland Historical Trust

CITY, TOWN

21 State Circle  
Annapolis

STATE

Maryland 21401

**7 DESCRIPTION****CONDITION**☐ EXCELLENT☐ GOOD☐ FAIR☐ DETERIORATED☐ RUINS☐ UNEXPOSED**CHECK ONE**☐ UNALTERED☐ ALTERED**CHECK ONE**☐ ORIGINAL SITE☐ MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1813

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Gorsuch Tavern is significant as a large roadside inn and country store that came on the scene almost as soon as the interstate turnpike of 1810 was opened to through traffic. It is also associated with one of the first families to settle in the county and represents their "westward" migration from tidewater to the interior.

The tavern is surrounded by much legend. It stands on "Gorsuch's Retirement" surveyed in 1772 for John Gorsuch. (1) The 1798 tax list of Middle River Upper Hundred showed John Gorsuch of Thomas with two log dwellings and some stone outbuildings. This John Gorsuch made his home on the present Belair Road near Baltimore Town, but two of his sons, John M. and Dickinson Gorsuch, became active in developing the north county property. (2)

Dickinson Gorsuch in 1797 patented two tracts in the Verona area: a 40-acre version of "Gorsuch's Retirement" and the 7-1/2 acre "Gorsuch's Mill Seat." The mill location was within sight of the present I-83 north of Belfast Road and the plant built there was last known as Ensor's Mill and stood until it burned in 1968. (3) In 1813, John M. and Dickinson Gorsuch signed an agreement to share parcels of land nearby where they had found "Burr stones or stone suitable for making millstones." Family tradition holds that the Gorsuch-Ensor mill did its grinding with locally produced stone—up to that time, most suitable stone for milling originated in Germany or France. (4)

The same agreement provided for the sharing of the Big Cold Bottom Spring and the Little Cold Bottom Spring near the 19th milestone. Dickinson also sold John M. a share in the mill.

The 19th milestone was a marker on the Baltimore and York Town Turnpike Road which has been completed through the Gorsuch lands in 1810, although the old "unimproved" route had passed that way for decades. It was also in 1810 that Dickinson Gorsuch ordered 150,000 bricks from Jacob Winters as revealed in a receipt that survived in family papers more than a century later. (5) The bricks were intended for the hotel or tavern that was certainly the beneficiary of the water-sharing agreement mentioned above. Scharf's county history states that Dickinson Gorsuch was a talented mechanic and designed the structure himself and planned its seemingly medieval vaulted dungeons. (6)

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

(continued)

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

M. V. Hensel, The Christiana Riot and Treason Trials (Lancaster, Pa., 1911).

J. Thomas Scharf. History of Baltimore City and County (Philadelphia, 1881).

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.6

Map 28 Parcel P223

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

1. S 9° 67' W 212 feet along center line of York Road
2. East 380 feet
3. N 4° 30' E 185 feet
4. S 79° 34' E 161.7 feet to a fence
5. N 79° 58' W 184 feet along fence to Beginning.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE None

COUNTY None

STATE

None

COUNTY

None

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

John W. McGrain, Historic Preservation Officer, Baltimore County

ORGANIZATION

Office of Planning and Zoning

DATE

October 11, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

401 Bosley Avenue

TELEPHONE

494-3495

CITY OR TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland 21204

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438

The water agreement deed bears out Dickinson as the builder and shows that construction was underway as of October 29, 1813, when John M. Gorsuch conveyed:

... also a piece of ground twenty feet square at the northernmost or Big Spring for the purpose of enclosing the same and for erecting a Dairy or Spring house, likewise a road way or passage of the width of ten feet in a conveniently straight course through the Land of the said John M. Gorsuch from that spring to the turnpike road and in the direction of the house of the said Dickinson Gorsuch now erecting on the East side of the said turnpike road and near to the aforesaid nineteenth milestone ....

Measurements in the deed show that the Big Cold Bottom Spring was 143 yards from the turnpike road "and opposite the nineteenth mile stone." The Little spring was 60 yards from the road, and the more southern of the two. Pipes were to be laid through John Gorsuch's land to the turnpike road. (7)

In the absence of the foregoing clues, a number of published articles, based on family tradition, have held that the building was put up for another Gorsuch brother, Captain Joshua Gorsuch, owner of the ship Bon Adventure, seafarer, and world traveler. The rambling inn once incorporated a long brick-arched, arcaded front porch with galleries of frame construction above—a feature the captain had supposedly seen on his journeys; when these exotic elements were removed, the tavern lost all resemblance to "a castle on the Rhine," if it ever had any. (8) It was at the Captain's brother's house on North Point Road where Robert Ross, the invading British General, commandeered his breakfast on the morning of the landing, September 14, 1814. (9)

Other legends adhered to Captain Joshua. He had supposedly sworn never to sail out of the Virginia Capes again when the War of 1812 began. The neighbors came to associate him with buccaneering and slaving, but apparently without cause. His manservant was a former seaman, reputed to be a barely reformed pirate, who was forced to live in the cellar and terrified both slaves and family. In writing his anonymous article of 1931, William Williams of the Jeffersonian inspected a ledger of Captain Joshua's that showed he had purchased his dry goods, spices, liquors, coffee, and snuff boxes from the usual channels of import. The basement with its cells with barred windows was probably intended for the safekeeping of store goods, but helped to foster legends about slave dealing, and the like. (10)

If Captain Joshua had any hand in having the tavern built, he did not acquire title to it until 1817 when he bought the 27-acre parcel from Edward Gorsuch, son and heir of Dickinson Gorsuch. The deed mentioned an "aforesaid house" and repeated the water agreement; the "same as" clause traced ownership to the 1813 deed to Dickinson Gorsuch from John M. Gorsuch (11)



The same parcel was still intact in 1880 when advertised in the Towson paper, and trustee Joseph G. Bosley wrote a sales notice that clearly links the large brick store to Captain Joshua Gorsuch's purchase of 1817. (12)

Scharf's history said of the Captain:

He was a man rigidly exacting as regarded himself and equally so toward others,--a man of peculiar character and temperment, odd and eccentric. His honesty and blunt frankness was proverbial. He lived to a great old age and left numerous progeny. The close of his life was spent on the well-known property situated at the nineteenth milestone on the Baltimore and York turnpike. (13)

Captain Joshua died in 1844 and the 1850 county map by J. C. Sidney shows his sons, "J. & G. Gorsuch" at this spot north of present Ensor Mill Road. In 1851, the tavern was the gathering place where various Gorsuch relatives met and set off for Christiana in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to recapture two slaves from the Edward Gorsuch place, "Retreat Farm," across the road and west of the tavern. With the aid of the U. S. Deputy Marshall, the Gorsuch party tracked down the slaves, but in the ensuing fracas on the stairway of a farmhouse hide-away, Edward Gorsuch was killed and Dickinson (the second of that name) was wounded (September 9). The story made page one of the very first issue of the New York Times ever printed. (14)

The Christiana Riot may be the cause of legendary associations between the Gorsuch cellars and the Underground Railroad. As with so many imaginary "safehouses" of that escape system, the slave-owning Gorsuches would have been the wrong people for an escapee to confide in. (On the other hand, Captain Joshua's will specified that Hannah, "now aged 18 or 19 years" be set free on attaining age 38—which would have been about 1864). (15)

The 1877 atlas showed F. Cole's store located in the residence of Joshua Gorsuch. A small advertisement on the map of District 8 read:

A Complete Assortment in White, Black, and  
Color, for sale by  
FRANK COLE  
Dealer in Groceries, Liquors, Fancy Goods,  
and Notions, &c. (16)

Franklin Cole was also a Gorsuch descendant and is credited with taking down the brick arches. (17)

In 1880, there was an inter-family lawsuit over the share owned by Joshua M. Gorsuch, who had died intestate in 1879. This suit includes exhibits of deeds from 1817, a plat, and much genealogical data. A trustee was appointed to sell the property, in which the tavern was Lot 1:

This tract is improved by a very large three story brick dwelling house, Barn, stable, and necessary out buildings.

This place has been used as a store stand for some time. (18)

Highest bidder was Mrs. Mary Jane Gorsuch, widow of George R. Gorsuch; she was shown in the 1896 tax ledger as owner of 23 acres of Gorsuch's Retirement and a brick dwelling. (19)

Mrs. Gorsuch left the property in 1907 to her grandson, Clarence G. Cole, who was shown as a storekeeper in the 1911 tax ledger and on the 1915 Bromley atlas. (20) The 1918 tax ledger showed his widow, Celia L. Cole with:

Dwelling & Store	70 X 26	
	50 X 21	\$3485. (21)

Mrs. Cole remarried and in 1920 sold to Benjamin M. Benson, letting the property out of the founding family. (22) In 1928, the structure is reported to have become a roadside tavern and progressed to a motor restaurant and ballroom which involved tearing out some walls (and violating the 18th Amendment). Some of the successive owners were:

1920	Benjamin M. Benson
1924	John P. Mays
1937	Cecelia L. Cole Johnson
1937	Walter L. Gordon
1938	Abraham S. Burkholder
1943	Frederick D. Burkholder
1944	Frank R. Slaughter and Lovelace Gorsuch Slaughter.

In 1937, when the place was sold under decree, assignee John Mays Little advertised it as "Ye Olde Tavern Property ... Improved by a large Brick Hotel building containing ten bedrooms with modern improvements, stable and other outbuildings." (23) Valuation of the house remained \$4000 through all its owners from 1923 to 1940. (24)

The Slaughters represented a return to family connections in the title and they changed the structure from a bar to an apartment house. (25) In 1964, an aluminum roadside historical marker was put up by the Baltimore County Historical Society. In 1976, the property passed to the Slaughter family's three daughters, who have formed Verona, Incorporated. (26)



## NOTES

1. Patents, BC & GS No. 45, ff. 164, Hall of Records, Annapolis.
2. J. Thomas Scharf, History of Baltimore City and County (Philadelphia, 1881), p. 881.
3. Patents IC No. O, f. 236, 281, H.R.
4. Baltimore City Deeds, WG 126:63.
5. "Ye Old Tavern at '19 Mile Stone' on York Road One Hundred and Twenty Years Old," Jeffersonian, Towson, December 26, 1931.
6. Scharf, History of Baltimore City and County, p. 881.
7. Baltimore City Deeds, WG 126:63.
8. "Ye Old Tavern," 1931.
9. William Stump, "Man in the Street: Gorsuch," Sun Magazine, May 27, 1951.
10. "Ye Old Tavern."
11. Baltimore City Deeds, WG 143:527.
12. Judicial Records, Towson, WMI 74:80.
13. Scharf, History of Baltimore City and County, p. 881.
14. "Fugitive Slave Riot in Lancaster Co., Pa." New York Daily Times, September 18, 1851, p. 1. Benjamin Herman, "He Died for Law," Sunday Sun, September 11, 1955.
15. Baltimore City Wills, DMP 20:145.
16. G. M. Hopkins, Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland (Philadelphia, 1877).
17. "Ye Old Tavern."
18. Judicial Records, Towson, WMI 74:80 (plat, f. 86).
19. Baltimore County Deeds, LMB 220:39. Also, Tax Ledger, District 8, 1896, n.p.
20. B.C. Deeds, WPC 326:566. Also, Tax Ledger District 8, 1911, f. 74.
21. Tax Ledger, District 8, 1918, f. 77.
22. B.C. Deeds, WPC 526, f. 298.
23. Judicial Records, CWB JR. 426:315; advertisement, f. 321.
24. B.C. Tax Ledgers, 8th District; 1923, ff. 21, 467; 1928-1940, f. 324, 511, 412. During ownership of John P. Mays, records show "1930 Barn Removed," abating \$150 from the assessment (f. 511).

## NOTES contd.

25. "Tavern's Romantic Past Undiminished By Prosaic, Present Day Use,"  
Jeffersonian, March 1, 1949.
26. Miscellaneous papers from current co-owner, Mrs. Portia Slaughter Nelson.

Maryland  
Baltimore County  
District VIII

BA-130  
Gorsuch Tavern  
Q301304326

1812

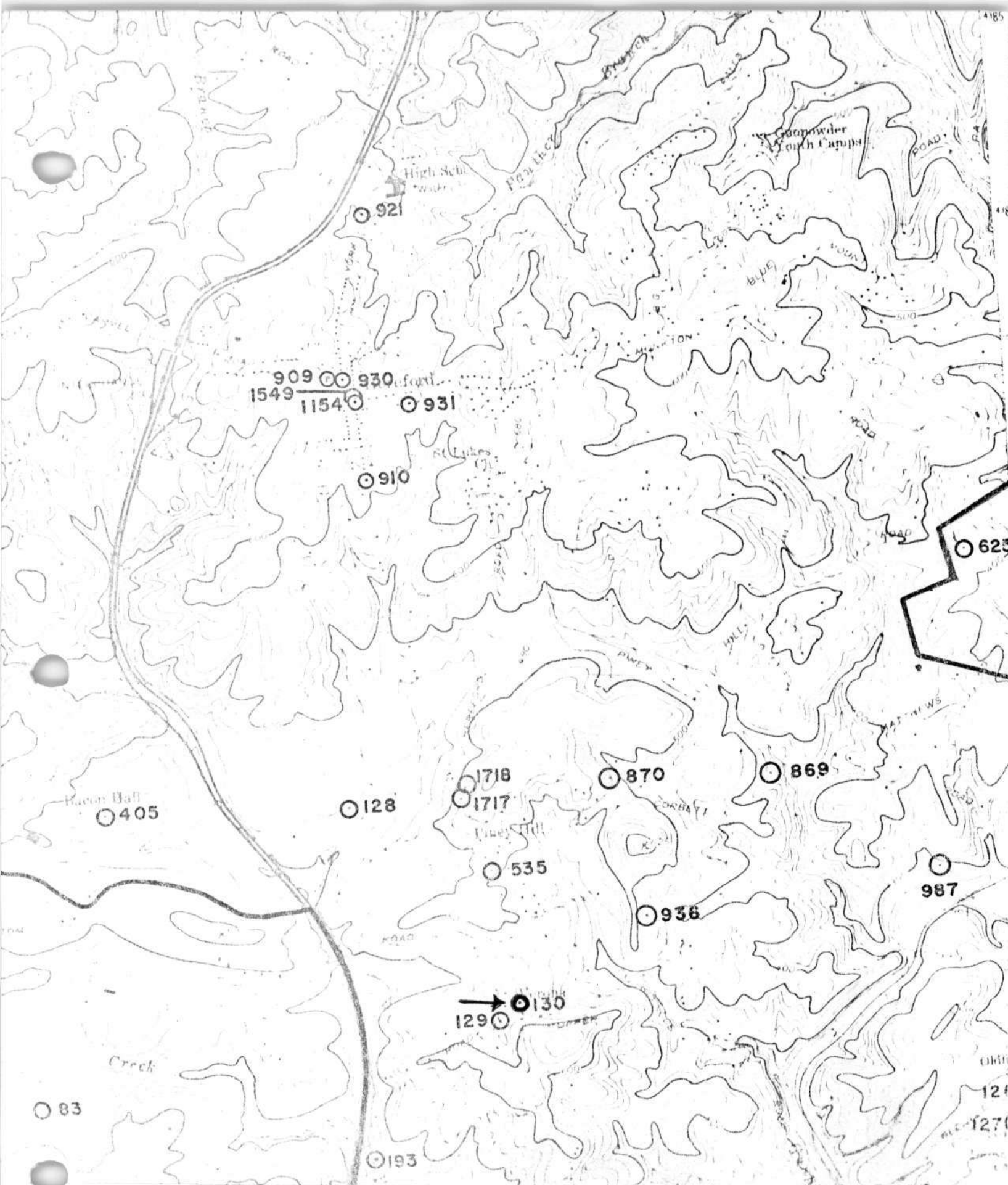
Built by Capt. Joshua Gorsuch as an Inn, and  
merchandize store, as well as a meeting place for  
slave trade.

Baltimore County Historical Marker, 1964.

color slides

(First HABS Report)  
E. Frances Offutt  
HABS COMMITTEE OF BALTIMORE  
COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

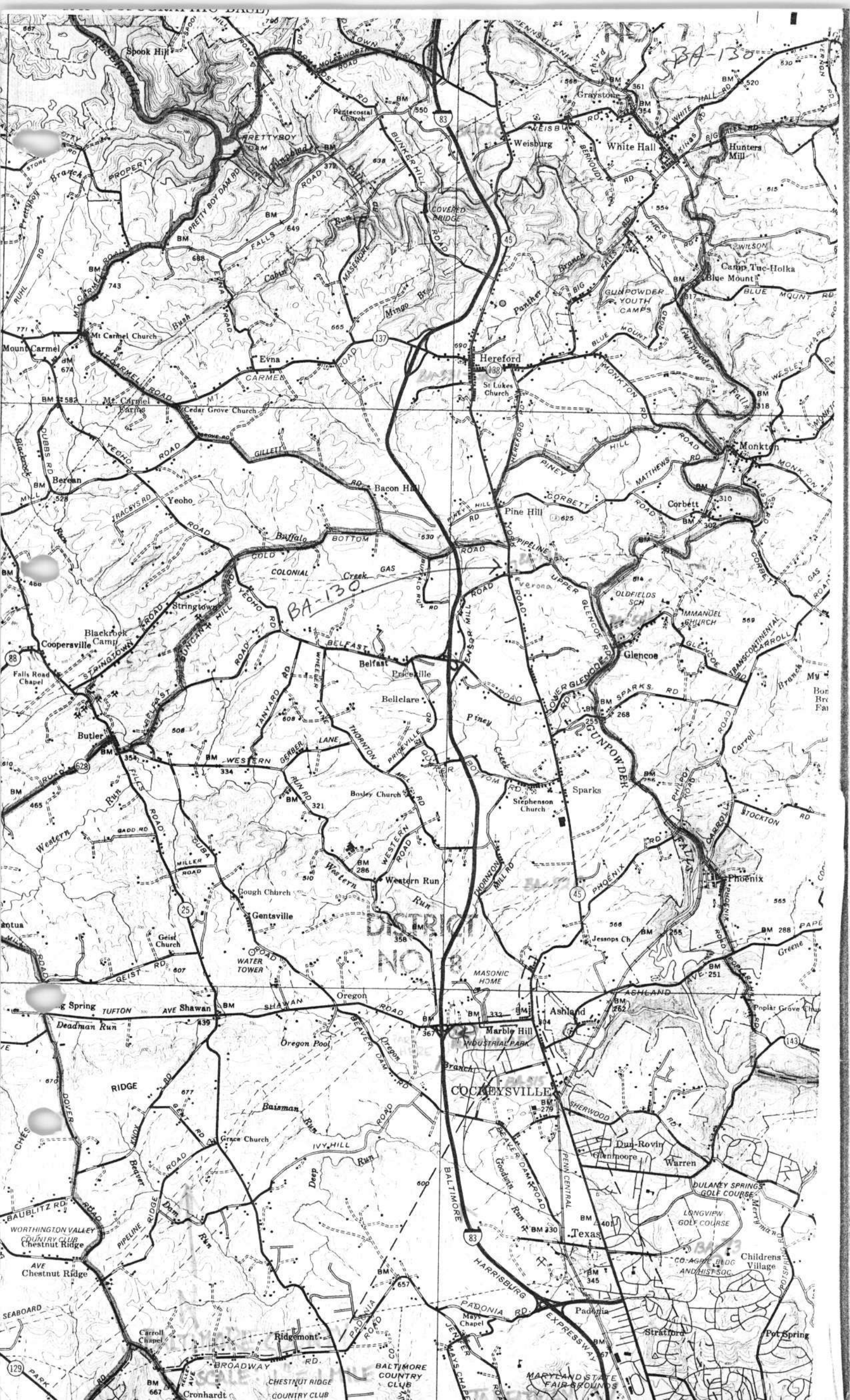
July 29, 1965



BALTIMORE COUNTY  
GORSUCH TAVERN BA-130  
HEREFORD QUAD











Gorsuch Panern

BA-130



Gorsuch Tavern

BA-130



Gorsuch Tavern . BA-130





Gorsuch Tavern

BA-130



Gorsuch Tavern

BA-130



Gorsuch Tavern

BA-130

BA-130  
Gorsuch Tavern (Verona Post Office, 19 Mile House)  
15911 York Road (MD 45), Sparks-Glencoe  
Jennifer K. Cosham, 23 May 2006



West elevation



Southwest elevation